DATELINE #83 CALIFORNIA MAY 26, 1976
EDWIN GORDON

HIGH-FLYING HOBBY
(VOICED PIECE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE.... ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY OUR DATELINE IS CALIFORNIA AND OUR STORY, FROM VOA WEST COAST CORRESPONDENT EDWIN GORDON IS ABOUT A HIGH FLYING HOBBY GAINING IN POPULARITY.

VOICE: AN AIR SHOW IS IN PROGRESS, AND TRIM PLANES BANK SMOOTHLY, DO SIMPLE TRICKS AND THEN SOAR AGAINST THE CLOUDS. IN THE BACKGROUND A HELICOPTER. SUDDENLY A FIGURE IS CATAPULTED FROM ONE OF THE PLANES AND SLOWLY PARACHUTES TO EARTH.

FROM A DISTANCE IT ALL LOOKS REAL. IT'S NOT UNTIL THE PLANES ARE BROUGHT IN TO LAND THAT YOU APPRECIATE THAT WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING AT ARE MODELS -- HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED, RADIO-CONTROLLED MODELS. THEY CAN HAVE WINGSPREADS OF MORE THAN A METER AND WEIGH TWO AND A HALF KILOGRAMS. SPEEDS ARE ABOUT THIRTY KILOMETERS AN HOUR. THE TINY PARACHUTIST IS PART OF ONE MODEL, AND THE HELICOPTER, TOO, IS A MODEL.

"DON'T CALL THEM TOYS," GEORGE SCOTT SAYS. "AND DON'T CALL THEM CUTE. WE'RE TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE TOY IMAGE. SOME PEOPLE ARE INSULTED BY IT." MISTER SCOTT IS PRESIDENT OF A CLUB OF R.C. ENTHUSIASTS. R.C. STANDS FOR "RADIO CONTROLLED." AND RIGHT NOW THERE ARE ABOUT

VOICE: (CONT'D) FIFTY-FIVE THOUSAND SERIOUS SUNDAY FLIERS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH RADIOS IN THEIR HANDS AND THEIR HEADS IN THE CLOUDS.

THE RADIO-CONTROLLED MODELS ARE FARILY NEW, DEVELOPING ALONG WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOLID-STATE RADIO SETS AND INTEGRATED CIRCUITS. LEARNING TO FLY ONE OF THE SLEEK MODELS CAN TAKE AS LONG AS GETTING A REAL PILOT'S LICENSE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SOME OF THE R.C. FANS ARE PROFESSIONAL PILOTS. BUT THEY DON'T HAVE AN EASIER TIME OF IT. THEY TEND TO BECOME CONFUSED AT FIRST WHEN THEY HAVE TO FLY THEIR MODELS TOWARDS THEM, WORKING THE CONTROLS IN MIRROR IMAGE. IT TAKES FOUR RADIO CHANNELS TO CONTROL A MODEL'S RUDDER, THROTTLE, AILEONS AND MOTOR FROM THE GROUND. EXTRAS SUCH AS RETRACTABLE LANDING GEAR OR THE PARACHUTIST WE SAW, CAN TAKE UP TO TEN CHANNELS. AND THAT REQUIRES CONCENTRATION.

ACCORDING TO MISTER SCOTT, THE EIGHT TO FIFTEEN MINUTES A PLANE IS IN THE AIR REQUIRES COMPLETE CONCENTRATION. HE BELIEVES YOU HAVE TO BE IN GOOD PHYSICAL SHAPE TO FLY AN R.C. MODEL. A HEAD COLD, OR ANY OTHER DISTRACTION CAN LEAD TO A CRASH.

CRASHES ARE PAINFUL FOR THE HOBBYIST. BEGINNERS CAN EXPECT TO PUT AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS INTO A SIMPLE KIT. MORE ADVANCED MODELS CAN COST FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS. BUT MORE IMPORTANT, A FINE MODEL CAN REPRSENT SIX MONTHS OF A HOBBYIST'S SPARE TIME.

VOICE: (CONT'D) FOR THAT REASON, THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE R.C. FLIERS IS THE LATE TWENTIES. AND THERE IS GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, TOO. AND ONE OF THE PLANES, OUT OF CONTROL, CAN BE A SERIOUS THREAT TO BYSTANDERS. SO PATIENCE -- WHILE BUILDING THE PLANE -- AND CONCENTRATION -- WHILE FLYING IT -- SEEMS TO BE THE MAIN SKILLS NEEDED.

BUT FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FLYING, SAYS MISTER SCOTT -- WHO'S BEEN AT IT FOR FOUR YEARS -- IS ENOUGH TO WIPE OUT A DAY OF FRUSTRATIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE, REPORTS ON PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US NEXT ----- (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER PROGRAM IN THIS SERIES. THIS IS ---------- .

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WJL/CAK